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*A VOICE  
from the  
FIRESIDE.*

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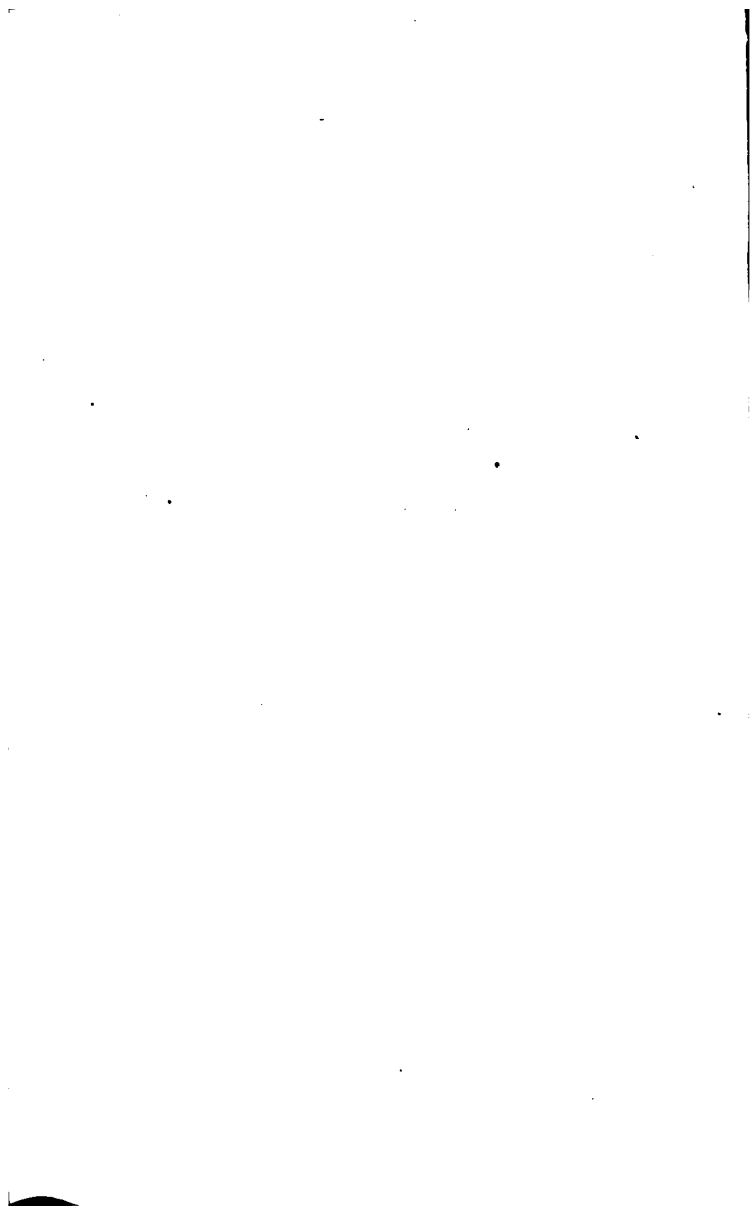
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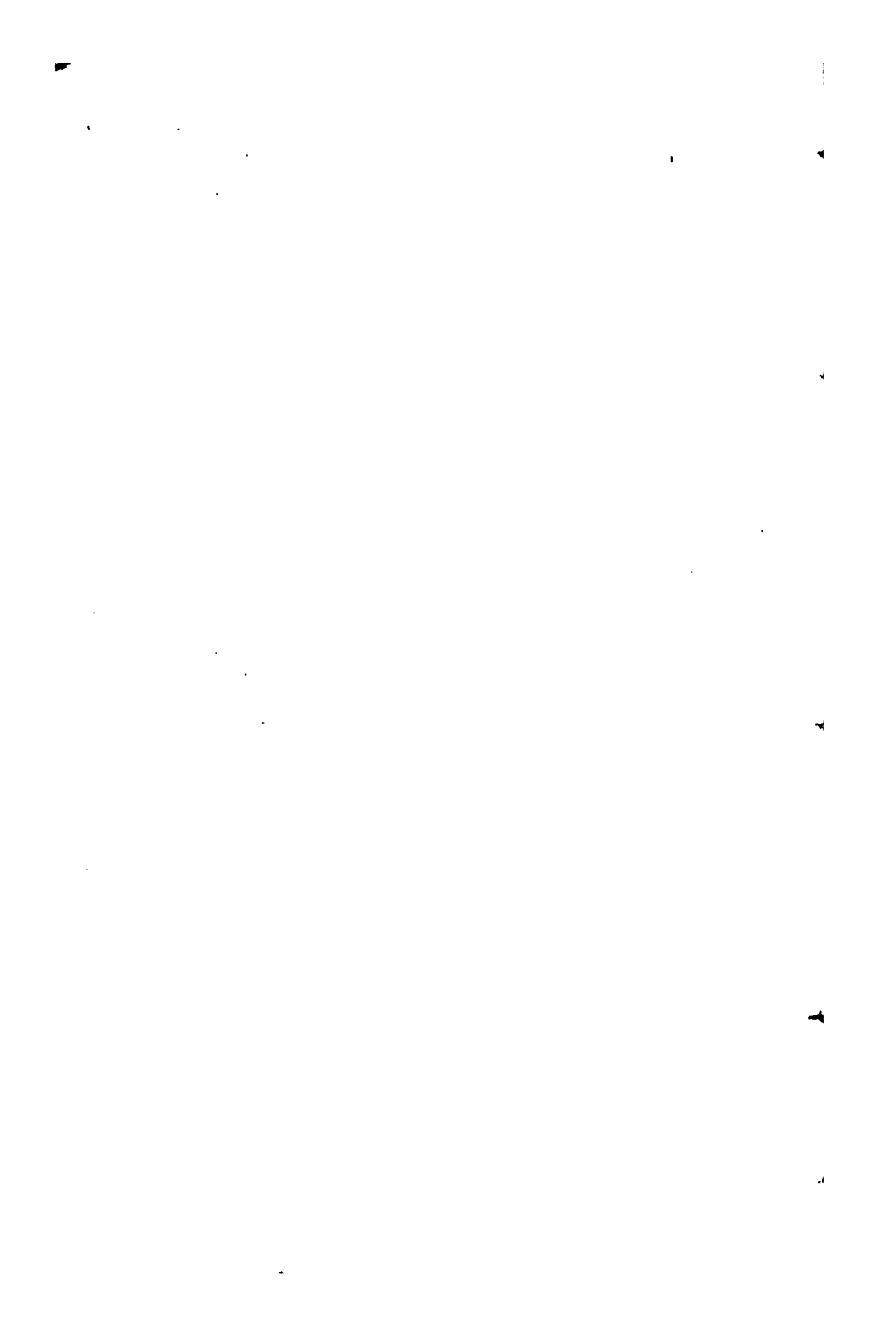
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# A Voice from the Fireside.



# A Voice from the Fireside;

OR, A

FEW REMARKS ON PRECOCIOUSNESS, AND THE  
PRESENT DEFECTIVE SYSTEM OF  
GIRLS' EDUCATION.

BY

MARY ELIZABETH MILLER.

(Née NASMYTH.)

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

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AYLOTT & SON, 8, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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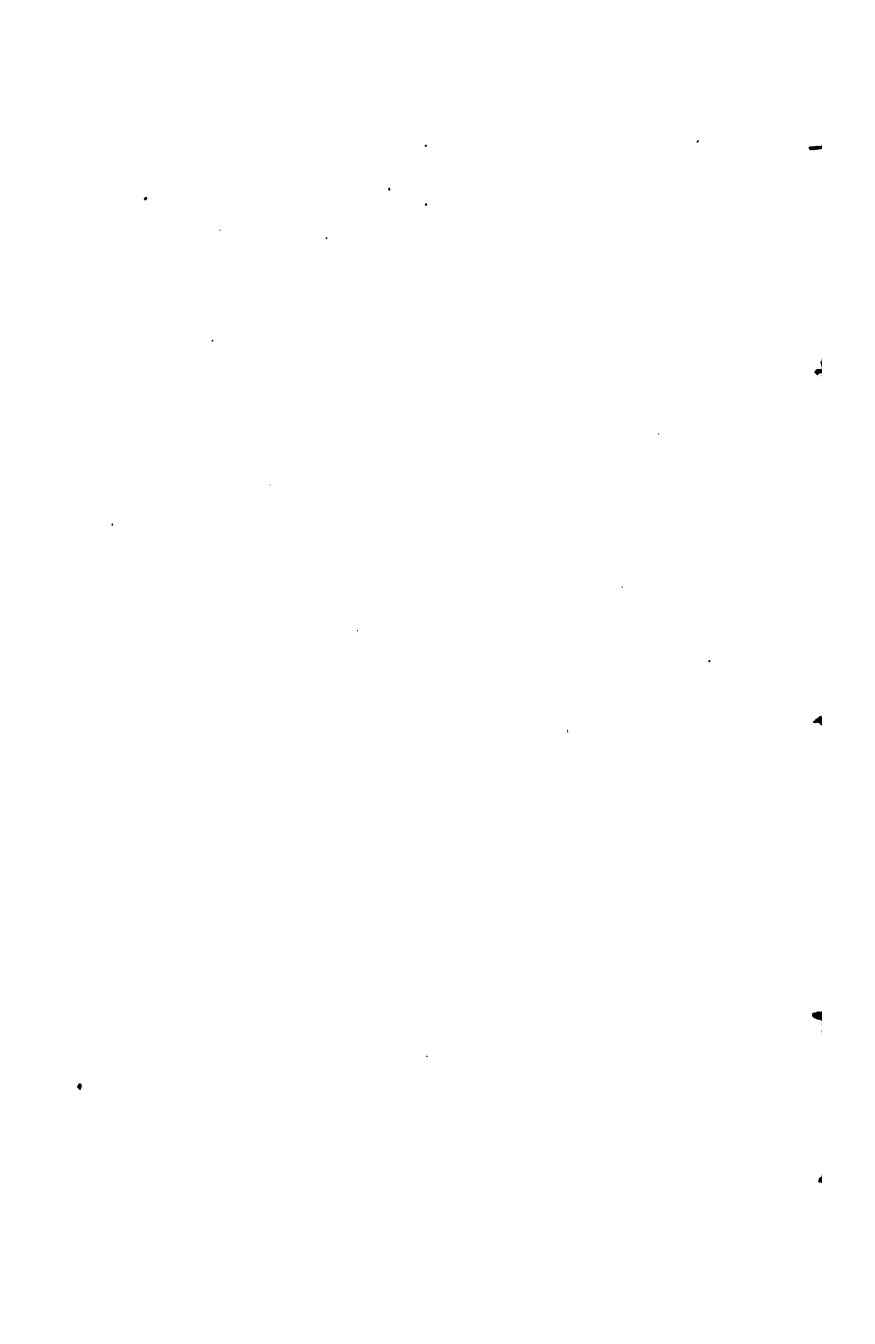
TO MY FATHER,

R. N., Esq.,

THIS VOLUME

*Is dedicated,*

AS A MARK OF AFFECTION AND RESPECT.



## PREFACE.

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ALTHOUGH our volume is small and unpretending, we have a few words to say by way of Preface.

The object of our little book is not to propound any Utopian theory, or any imaginary grand and infallible rule, which is supposed to counteract and render null all the small trials and troubles of life, or to ensure the young turning out paragons of perfection. We know too well that, as long as human nature exists, all rules must be more or less fallible, and the most plausible schemes more or less disappointing.

All we purpose is to bring prominently forward defects and evils in the training of the young, which most people are aware of, but

which few realize ; and to suggest the adoption of some old and simple rules, the virtues of which are already admitted.

We have been led to the consideration of the subject from observing the great amount of irritation, annoyance, and even unhappiness, which constantly arises in families from the want of attention to small things, from the defects in the present system of education, the neglect of imparting to young girls a knowledge of household duties, and of useful womanly occupations, while a large portion of their time is devoted to the acquirement of what is often but a superficial acquaintance with accomplishments, overlooking the fact that these will never of themselves fit a woman for properly fulfilling the duties of mistress of a household or mother of a family.

These defects in education are, we believe, more common in the present day than they have ever been at any previous period.

There seems to be among the middle and lower classes a great degree of ambition to rise above the sphere of their birth, and parents sharing this ambition too often allow their daughters to spend their time in playing on the pianoforte, reading novels, and acquiring a smattering of foreign languages. The knowledge of every-day home duties being considered beneath the notice of a well-educated young lady.

We are disposed to believe that the remarkable feature among the rising generation, which is termed precociousness, may be traced in some measure to this superficial system of education; and to the same system may partly be attributed the overweening extravagance in dress, which is so striking in the present day—an evil which we are all ready enough to deplore in our servants, but which we are perfectly blind to in ourselves.

We have purposely made our remarks brief, as we think a few suggestions, in small compass, to be more likely to prove popular than lengthy details in a bulky form.

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# A VOICE FROM THE FIRESIDE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### HOME DUTIES.

“Despise not thou a small thing either for evil or for good ;

“For slender joys, often repeated, fall as sunshine on the heart.”

BELIEVING that much unhappiness in families is caused by the want of management in household matters, arising from ignorance on the part of women, we venture to offer a few hints on the subject.

Many matrimonial troubles might be avoided were greater attention bestowed on the training of our daughters, in developing in them a taste for home duties and occupations as well as in storing their minds with knowledge, and having them taught a variety of accomplishments. The latter are not to be disparaged by any means ; they are of great importance in their right place, but they ought not to be

made the sole or chief desideratum in girls' education.

Every thing which helps to cultivate the understanding and improve the mind, every thing which tends to make women intelligent helpmeets, should be eagerly sought after and striven for ; but this should not be done to the exclusion of womanly occupation, or at the sacrifice of feminine delicacy.

In the present day there is a strong tendency to excessive teaching, both of boys and girls, and the systems which prevail in most of the schools of our large towns are such as to necessitate the employment of almost the whole of a young girl's time in arduous study. She is absent the greater part of the day at her college ; and when she returns home, her hours are devoted to preparing lessons for the following day.

Now, to our way of thinking, this is a mistake, in so far as we know that, generally speaking, a woman's sphere of life is "home." She has no need to qualify herself for a profession, as her brothers have, unless, indeed, it be in cases where a young person is to earn her living by teaching ; then, of course, she

must make sacrifice of everything which stands in the way of her study. But we are speaking of women who are supported by fathers, husbands, or brothers, as the bulk of womankind are.

It is not to be understood that women should be brought up to look upon matrimony as the great prize of life; but at the same time the destiny of woman, or at least of a large portion of the female sex, is that of becoming wives and mothers; and the qualifying of them in every way for these responsible relations ought always to be kept prominently in view. We need not say much of the large amount of time and money which is spent upon teaching accomplishments, which are frequently looked upon merely as helps to attract *before* marriage, and reserved for display, and not for home use, *after*; or of the lamentable want of attention to the teaching of simple, every day, home duties. These are left to be learnt as best they may; not unfrequently they are never learnt at all; or, if they are, it is often at the cost of family comfort and happiness.

How very much better would it be if mothers were to associate their daughters with them in

the cares and anxieties of housekeeping ; to show them, by their own example, that an immense amount of happiness and wellbeing is dependent on the regular, methodical attention to *small things* ; and that a great amount of pleasure may be derived from the mere punctual performance of duty, to say nothing of that which attends being able to contribute to the happiness of others. This is a lesson which cannot be taught too early. Moreover, a well-educated intelligent mother has it in her power to prove to her daughters that a refined taste, an accomplished well-stored mind, are by no means incompatible with the fulfilment of the most homely duties, should circumstances necessitate their undertaking such ; but, on the contrary, the really well-trained mind will carry her intelligence into the most trivial matters, and probably accomplish the task in hand in a way far superior to that of the less well educated.

We have the very highest and best illustration of how a family ought to be trained, in the example of our illustrious sovereign and her lamented consort. With such a distinguished authority, surely none, be their posi-

tion in life high or low, can deem it derogatory to dignity to make a knowledge of household duties, womanly occupations, nursing of the sick, a prominent feature in female education. In addition to the guarantee which the first lady in the land has afforded us, of such being consistent with the most lofty social position, those who make trial of the plan will find that there is nothing undignified in doing one's duty, whatever that duty may be. The only requisite is to look at such occupation from a high point of view ; to look at it in its character of duty, without thinking of what the occupation itself may be ; whether it be to darn socks, to stitch-on buttons, to make the pudding or pie, or prepare some delicacy for an invalid's fastidious palate ; so long as these are things which require to be done, and will be left undone, unless the mother, wife, or daughter put her shoulder to the wheel : then a woman is in the path of duty in attending to such ; and far from appearing undignified, she will secure for herself the respect of every sensible person, not only because she attends to homely duties, but by showing that she is not ashamed of so doing.

Women may feel quite sure on the question of dignity, that the real want of it lies in shrinking from the performance of duties because they are humble, or in permitting a feeling of shame to come in the way, and either prevent their being done, or if done, carefully concealing the fact from their friends and acquaintance; a system which completely destroys all comfort, and makes that which would otherwise afford pleasure and satisfaction, a source of worry and annoyance.

We remember on one occasion calling upon a friend. Some little time elapsed before she came into the room, during which her little girl appeared, and was presently followed by mamma, bonneted and shawled, who apologized for the delay, and said she had been engaged in preparing to go out. The little girl, surprised to hear her mother tell an untruth, exclaimed, with childlike ingenuousness, "Oh! mamma, what a story; you were in the kitchen making a pie."

The infringement of dignity was undoubted here! How much more sensible and dignified would our friend have been had she denied herself to early visitors, if it was inconvenient

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for her to see them ; or, if she did not wish to do this, why not have simply apologized for the delay, on the plea of her having been occupied in some household matters which had detained her.

It is not surprising that young girls should keep aloof from acquiring a knowledge of duties which their mothers are always ashamed to own, and that they should deem it time enough to do so when necessity presses. Hence it often happens that mothers of large families and small means are careworn drudges, while their daughters spend the day in playing on the pianoforte, and in reading novels.

Were each female member of the family to have some little portion of the household duties allotted to her special charge, the mother would be greatly relieved, the daughters would be gaining valuable experience, comfort and order would prevail, and ample time would still be found to prosecute the improvement of the mind. Girls would thus become fitted for any station in which providence might afterwards place them. If they became the wives of poor men, their education and accomplishments would render them cheerful, pleasant, intelli-



gent companions ; their knowledge of common every day duties would secure regularity and comfort in their homes, and give them a very secure hold on their husbands' affections. Those who became the wives of wealthy men would equally experience the great advantage of possessing practical knowledge of the details of housekeeping. They would be all the better fitted to assume the management of a large establishment, and would be enabled to direct how work ought to be done, as well as know when it was properly performed. In every position in life in which a woman can find herself, would such knowledge tend to happiness. To families with small means it would lead to comfort and economy ; to those in affluent circumstances, to the assurance that there was neither waste nor extravagance. In short, under any circumstances, the practical familiarity with womanly occupation will render woman all the more eminently qualified to be a helpmeet for her husband, and ensure her being valued and respected by her children. Men would find attractions from without much less alluring, when their own home was associated with a cheerful, companionable, intelli-

gent wife, an orderly well-regulated family, a comfortable well-managed household. Husbands would feel their club less absorbing; sons and brothers would cease to think that there was no pleasure to be found save in excitement and dissipation; girls would experience a value in their accomplishments, beyond that of mere display, when they found there was opportunity for making them sources of enjoyment to the family circle. All the members of the household would naturally look up with increased affection and respect to the parent who could so wisely combine refinement of taste and intellectual cultivation with attention to all the minute details which are requisite to a thoroughly well-managed house.

Girls would also learn very much that is valuable and important in being constantly with their mothers; they would gain a great deal of useful knowledge which the best school could not impart. In thus sharing, as far as their years permit, cares and labours with their mother, there would be no fear that old heads would grow on young shoulders. On the contrary, the effect would be beneficial; if in no other way than in taking their thoughts

off themselves, and in checking vanity ; besides, their thus realizing life as it is would greatly counteract the foolish, high-strained tone of imagination, which is often excited and fed by novels, so extensively read in the present day.

We feel confident that it is only necessary to train girls to interest themselves in the small duties alluded to, in order to ensure their taking to them cordially when placed in positions of responsibility. There may be a few exceptions, where no teaching or training would develop a liking for homely occupations ; but such are rare. Most women have a natural aptitude for them, and cases where the absence of attention to them is felt, arise most frequently either from a want of knowledge, or from a feeling that they are ashamed to admit their knowledge, or that they ever make use of it. The sooner so false a feeling is got rid of the better, for it is in reality false ; and women have only to disembarass themselves of it in order to feel pleasure and satisfaction in ministering to the temporal wants of their households.

## CHAPTER II.

## MOTHER'S INFLUENCE.

"But trifles lighter than straws are levers in the building up of character.

"For character groweth day by day, and all things aid it in unfolding."

THE powers of imitation, we all know, are strongly developed in children. We have only to notice them at their play, in order to see how much of it is composed of imitating, or attempting to imitate, what has come under their observation. A little girl will naturally imitate "mamma's" tones and manner, in speaking to her doll; she will dress, undress, and put it to bed, just as she has seen "mamma" or "nurse" do to "baby." We may thus see how much depends on a mother's example. Her daughters, and sons too, to a great extent, will inevitably form habits and acquire tastes in accordance with those of their mother. If they are brought up in the neglect

of cleanliness, or indifference to order and regularity, the chances are strongly against their being noted for neatness, cleanliness, or punctuality in after life. Never having experienced the advantages of these, it is impossible they should estimate their value.

They may conclude, and not unnaturally, that, as they have struggled through during childhood, so they may continue in manhood, unless they chance to come in contact with a different kind of life : a sense of their own deficiencies, a desire for something better, may then dawn upon them, but it does not by any means follow of necessity.

Familiarity with what is debasing, whether morally or physically, generally has the effect of destroying the perceptions of good and evil : habit being second nature, enables people to live in polluted atmospheres, injurious to mind and body, without their appearing to be conscious of them.

On the other hand, where a mother has set the example of cleanliness and regularity, the children are certain by degrees to acquire similar habits, unless, indeed, they are sent from home at an early period, and removed

from her influence—a plan which we highly deprecate for girls ; as, however excellent many schools may be, there is nothing like home training for women, whose sphere is home.

When daughters are accustomed to share duty and anxiety with their mother, they naturally feel a strong affection for her, and an implicit faith in all she does being right and good, grows out of it ; a faith which they can never feel in any schoolmistress, or indeed in any other save their mother, even though the latter may be inferior to the former in mental capacity. They unconsciously copy their mother's ways, believing such always to be the best ; if she be careful, prudent, and painstaking, little by little they acquire the same habits. They may not do so all at once, or even if they do, they may not put them into practice ; but a girl so brought up at her mother's apron string, to use a homely phrase, has the best chance of proving a clever, useful, thrifty wife.

Example always goes before precept ; no mere teaching or telling will instil these habits into the young. They are imbibed insensibly,

provided only the proper opportunities are afforded. We have already said what we think about education and improvement of the mind, so we need not fear our being so misapprehended as to let it be imagined that we advocate young girls being made household drudges, or that we recommend a woman's whole thoughts being absorbed in superintending and taking part in domestic duties. We have said enough to prove our conviction, that the combination of the two is quite compatible, and that the woman whose soul never soars above her servants' delinquencies, and the ingredients of a pie or a pudding, is as much to be pitied as the "*bas bleu*," who is so *exaltée* in her ideas, as to be indifferent about comforts or appearances, too abstracted and clever to notice such trifles as holes in her stockings or the fact of her fingers protruding through her gloves !

It is much to be regretted that the idea should be entertained and so extensively credited, that women of talent and intelligence are of necessity thoroughly bad managers in their families. It no doubt encourages the belief, that those who do attend to their

duty must be the reverse. The sooner so erroneous a notion is removed the better.

There is no reason why a clever woman should live in slovenliness and dirt, or make a guy of herself. No doubt, in some women of very remarkable talent, there is a tinge of eccentricity; but it should be borne in mind that eccentricity and bad management are not limited to clever women. There are many who are neither clever nor eccentric, and who yet are as thoroughly deficient in their knowledge of small things as they are in Latin, Greek, or learned subjects.

"Can do," is a little accomplishment, very easily carried about, always ready when wanted, and neither troublesome nor expensive.

While advocating strongly that daughters should, as far as their years permit, share in every-day home duties, it is as desirable that mothers should interest themselves in the pleasures and recreations of their children. "All work and no play makes Jack a bad boy." Recreation and amusement are as necessary as they are natural to the young. Mothers should, as far as they possibly can, enter into the amusements of their children;



and in doing so, they will find not only that the effect will be directly beneficial on themselves, in proving a distraction from cares and anxieties, but will also help to cultivate a cheerful disposition, and tend greatly to increase the feeling of affection on the part of the children towards them.

A mother's presence thus becomes an essential element in all enjoyments, and her influence cannot fail to have the effect of protecting her girls from acquiring views and tastes which may afterwards be a source of regret. They are thus secured from forming undesirable friendships, or making unsuitable acquaintances; and a wholesome restraint is placed on the folly and extravagance into which the young are often led through the exuberance of their spirits.

In short, in work or play, in joy or sorrow, children should learn to feel that their best friends are their parents; that none are so ready to sympathize with their griefs and disappointments; none so ready to participate in their pleasures, their success, or good fortune; while none are so willing to lend a helping hand in case of need or trouble. Nothing

should be lost sight of which tends to develope and strengthen this feeling of confidence. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" Might not many of the shoals and quicksands so fatal to youth be safely steered through, if a greater degree of confidence existed between parents and children? Might not many a trouble be lessened, if not removed, by the sympathy and the advice of a father or mother?

There is, too frequently, a lack of this confidence and intimacy between parents and children—a confidence and an intimacy which are quite consistent with filial respect, and which would, we believe, afford a valuable means of influence to the parent over his child. Many young persons, who are in perplexity and difficulty, owing to their own follies, and ignorance of the world, long for a kind and sympathizing ear into which they can pour their griefs; but from not having acquired the habit of holding familiar intercourse with their father or mother, a feeling of reserve, it may be of shame, deters them from opening their hearts fully, and seeking help and counsel from those best qualified to afford it.

## CHAPTER III.

## PRECOCIOUSNESS.

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.

"Therefore get wisdom : and with all thy getting get understanding."

IN the foregoing remarks we have alluded to the desirableness of associating young girls, at an early age, in the management of the household ; of teaching them, practically, how much of the comfort and happiness of everyday life depends upon attention to small things. It may not, therefore, be inappropriate to add a few words on one of the great evils of the day, which is designated "Precociousness."

Almost every one is familiar with the development of this in the rising generation in some form or another ; whether it be in the young five-year-old, standing in paterfamilias' attitude before the fire, expressing his indignation at his elder sister having described the pre-

vious evening's party, composed of babies of his own age, as *juvenile*; or in the young Cantab, with legs outstretched on the sofa, treating his father to expensive sherry, and in reply to the latter's observation, that *he* does not lay in wine of such a costly kind, the precocious young son patronizingly says, "Ah! no more should I, father, if I'd nine children to provide for, as you have!"

In short, the constantly recurring illustrations of it are but too familiar to every one, not merely through the satires of "Punch," but through each individual's own experience. Every one has witnessed the development of it at some period, in more or less degree.

How the evil has arisen, it would be hard to say. Whether it has sprung from superficial education, from the system of cramming a certain amount of instruction into young minds, overlooking the essential groundwork of real mental training, or whether it has, in some degree, sprung from the impetus which has been given to everything by railroads and telegraphs, it would be difficult to determine. There is no doubt that we live in a fast age, and that steam has not only been the means

of accelerating our powers of locomotion and communication, but most things seem to have participated in the increase of speed.

We hurry and race through life; or if we take to a slower rate of movement than that of the crowd around us, we must make up our minds to be walked *over*, or left behind. Even our enjoyments are all pursued in the same fast spirit. In the short space of a week or ten days, we fly through a whole country. We have visited its capital, its provincial scenery of note, we have seen and done all the tourist ought to see and do; and quick, presto, we are whirled home again! This day week we supped with the monks on the top of Mont St. Bernard, and to-day we are gazing listlessly from our club window in St. James's Street, or we are plodding at our ledgers in our dingy, familiar office, as though we had never left it, and no such place as Mont St. Bernard with its monks existed. And so it is the transitions and the changes of life, in the present fast age, seem more frequent and more rapid, as well as more sudden, than of yore. People do not glide gradually, step by step, from affluence to poverty, or *vice versâ*, but the change is, for the most part, sudden.

The telegraph has communicated some promising speculation ; the telegraph has conveyed our consent to invest in it ; and again the telegraph plays to the tune of our ruin. And so the world goes round, making its inhabitants for ever play at the baby's dance of "Here we go up, up, up ; and there we go down, down, down."

We might here pause to speculate on the question, whether our enjoyments are enhanced, or the reverse, by our rapid mode of pursuing them ; or whether our ancestors' jog-trot, stage-coach, six-miles-an-hour pace in everything did not afford them quite as much happiness as does our more rapid rate of pursuit. Our object being a practical one, we shall leave speculation to wiser heads, and for the present be satisfied to accept the axiom, "Whatever is, is right."

We have such daily recurring proof of the existence of what is termed precociousness, or, in fact, of the unnatural development of character in the young, that to doubt or ignore it would be affectation. On the contrary, it becomes very important that parents and guardians should realize the fact in all its fulness,

and thence be induced to set themselves to make strenuous efforts towards bringing some counter influence to bear upon it.

Boys and girls are now but a name. In real life, we rarely meet with them. Babyhood and manhood are the two stages of existence; tall hats and tailcoats the almost immediate successors to long frocks and bibs. Were outward attire the only evidence of the evil, it would not, after all, be so serious; but unfortunately it does not stop there.

However ridiculous the little mannikin is that we meet daily in knickerbockers and Hessian boots, toddling along in all the uncertainty of gait of an infant, if precociousness rested there, we might trust to good taste ultimately exterminating the absurdity; but, unfortunately, early knickerbockers, early Hessians, etc., are but the emblems of early and unnatural development of character.

It may be amusing and laughable to see little Harry stand by the fire, with hands behind his back, and tell his little sister she had best not give her opinion on this or that, since "women know nothing about such matters;" or again, a few years further on, when

we find the lad stroking an invisible moustache and equally invisible beard, telling his cousin Flora, "that from all he has seen of the world, and from his experience, he has come to the conclusion that marriage is a mistake, and that once a fellow gets married he is done for."

All these indications may, as we said, be amusing, or even laughable, just as it is curious and amusing to see a diminutive representation of the human species—a being who has attained to the years of manhood, but in size remains of the stature of a child.

Such may excite curiosity, but it will always be accompanied by a feeling of pity, when we think how perfectly unnatural the object is. Our admiration is reserved for the well-formed, fully grown, and perfectly developed stature.

Much might be written to illustrate the various phases which this precociousness assumes; but too much cannot be said to impress upon parents the importance of bestowing the utmost care and attention in the bringing up of their children.

We cannot but give it as our opinion, that the system, so extensively in vogue, of *day*



schools and colleges for young ladies, is a disadvantageous one in many respects. No doubt, as regards mere tuition, they are excellent ; but mere teaching, mere instruction, will never qualify either boy or girl for the duties of active practical life.

The system of educating girls at these day schools or colleges has, we believe, much to answer for, in developing independence and self-confidence to a degree quite unsuitable and most unbecoming in the young.

Take, for instance, a girl attending one of these establishments. She is obliged to traverse the streets some three or four times daily, if not alone, what is worse, accompanied by a servant, from whom she often learns quite as much as at her college.

If she happen to be at all nice looking, she must become accustomed, at an early age, to the audacious stare of the idle or unprincipled ; and by imperceptible degrees, day by day, little by little, but none the less surely, she loses all feelings of modesty, diffidence, and reserve, all of which are both natural and charming in the young girl whom we believe to be inexperienced in the world, inexperienced

in its ways and its wickedness. Besides this, there follows of necessity, upon this self-confidence, an over consciousness of her own attractions, and we all know, that the constant realizing to the mind of our own perfections, real or imagined, produces what is called vanity.

Girls, no doubt, acquire an extensive knowledge of Latin, mathematics, and other scientific subjects in the establishments alluded to. Nor, as we have already said, do we wish for one moment to discourage whatever tends to improve the mind, and raise its tone ; but we do not think these to be worth the sacrifice that is too frequently made to secure them, viz., that of feminine delicacy and maidenly reserve.

The young mind is like wax, highly impressionable, and capable of being moulded into almost any form. It is, therefore, most important to be careful, as far as we can, of the circumstances by which we allow our children to be surrounded, and should guard against those which are likely to change the simplicity and innocence of youth into the prematurely knowing, experienced woman of the world.

At the same time, we believe it to be impossible, under any circumstances, to carry out the Utopian views entertained by some, of shielding young persons from all knowledge of evil. Books, and those with whom they must necessarily meet, in the daily intercourse of life, all produce their impression, and are continually increasing the knowledge of good and evil. Were it practicable to bring up a young girl or lad with such watchfulness and care as to preclude them from knowing that any wickedness existed in the world, above and beyond what they felt in their own hearts and thoughts, were such a scheme practicable, we consider a man or woman so brought up would be wholly unfitted to take his or her place in the world, and to meet the temptations, the trials, and disappointments of life.

We all know that the mere ignorance of the existence of evil will, at no time, and under no circumstances, enable a man to resist a temptation which presents itself to him personally and individually, if the temptation be of such a nature as to appeal strongly to human weakness and to human inclinations, as most temptations do. The fact of the man so tempted

having been, up to that moment, ignorant that such evil as he is tempted to commit ever existed, or ever was committed, could in no way enable him to resist such temptation. If he succeed in resisting it, it is more likely that he will do so when fully alive to the extreme wickedness of his act, to the disagreeable consequences which will follow such an act, as well as from the principles instilled in early life. A mother's influence will here again prove its efficacy and value in counteracting impressions as they arise. Her watchful eye detects readily an erroneous conception, a mistaken view, and a kind and sensible word spoken at the right time may do much towards nipping an evil in the bud, which, if left to flourish unchecked, would soon spread its roots and branches, and become so strong a growth as to defy all efforts to eradicate it.

We are not prepared to say, that young persons, brought up with the utmost care and watchfulness on the part of their parents, are certain to turn out paragons of perfection. No one can speak certainly of results ; but were such even more uncertain than they are, we ought not to lessen our endeavours to do

all that lies within our power towards the right bringing up of our children. We have no golden rule to offer on the subject ; we have no infallible rule which, if put in force, will ensure those to whom it is applied turning out everything the fondest parents could wish ; but we have a firm conviction that the most probable means of mitigating, if not of obviating, the many trials attendant on young persons entering life, would be the cultivation of an affectionate feeling of complete trust and confidence in their parents' good sense and sympathy.

We believe a mother's influence will do more than any amount of preaching, lecturing, scolding, or punishing, towards restraining the young from evil. It is the most powerful weapon we can have ; and whatever amount of discipline may have been carried out in early life through the medium of the rod, a time must come when the use of such is impracticable, and, when it does, our means of coercing our children must cease.

There is but one weapon which will suit all ages, all circumstances, and that is, *love*. It may sometimes be forgotten for a while in the

heat of passion, in the thoughtlessness of youth ; the unwillingness to grieve a loving mother, or appear ungrateful to her, may be lost sight of for a time, but, the excitement once over, the thoughts of that ever kind, ever sympathising, and truly loving heart, are sure to lure the erring one back to the right path, and lead him to seek forgiveness for the past, and counsel for the future.

Before closing the present chapter, we may remind parents, that their devotion of themselves to their children, their sacrifice of self, their prayers, their efforts and their labour, are certain to yield them a rich return in the love and affection they are sure to engender in the hearts of their sons and daughters. Should death snatch them away before they have witnessed the fruits of their labours, they will have the consolation, in their last hours, of knowing that they have been scattering good seed, and the fruit will assuredly come, though they are, for wise reasons no doubt, not permitted to see it. They must sow in faith. In faith they must conscientiously discharge their duty, to the best of their ability, and leave results to God.

## CHAPTER IV.

## FAST YOUNG LADIES AND OVER-DRESS.

"Oh, woman! lovely woman! Nature made thee  
To temper man; we had been brutes without you;  
Angels are painted fair to look like you;  
There's in you all that we believe of heaven,—  
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,  
Eternal joy, and everlasting love."

To be a fast young lady, and to be acknowledged as such, has become the ambition of a very large number of young persons.

To be fast has become a fashion, and one which most right-minded people will be glad to see disappear.

Meanwhile, let girls pause for one moment, and endeavour to analyze this peculiar phase of modern society. Let them ask themselves what is really implied in being called "fast," and what are the true terms which would be necessary in order to give a definition of it.

Were we asked to explain the expression

"fast," we should say it was a term used to describe a class of young ladies who had arrived at the conclusion that every indication of feminine delicacy, feeling, manner, and mode of expression was a weakness, and something to be sneered at, pitied, and despised when met with.

In order to be a fast young lady, it is necessary to lay aside all reserve and refinement—everything that savours of womanly weakness; to have no troublesome scruples, but to be ready to accord an appreciating smile to the broadest joke. There must be no feeling of dependence on the stronger sex; but by adopting, as far as decency permits, masculine attire, masculine habits, and masculine modes of expression, accompanied by a thorough knowledge of slang, and a fluency in using it, show themselves to be above all narrow-minded prejudices. There must be no thinking about other people's feelings; if people will be thin-skinned, let them keep out of their way at all events.

Should "mamma" raise her voice in a feeble remonstrance, the fast young lady impresses upon her that "she is no judge of



these matters. In her old school-days, everything and every one was slow ; but it is quite changed now."

In short, to sum up, to be a fast young lady, modesty, delicacy, refinement, respect for superiors, consideration for the aged, must all be set aside ; and boldness, independence, irreverence, brusqueness, and we fear too often heartlessness, must take their place.

This is the definition we should give of the term "fast." It is no exaggerated picture. We only wish, most sincerely, that our fast young friends could really "see themselves as others see them ;" and we quite believe that one glimpse, through any spectacles save their own, would reveal so very unattractive a picture to them, that they would gladly drop their rapid pace, and glide into a gentler one.

Moreover, we incline to the opinion that, after all, this fast tendency is not genuine. We have too high an opinion of the young girls of our country to believe that such ever could be so. It is an affectation, and an affectation of a miserable kind.

This consideration, as well as the fact that refinement and being fast are incompatible

terms, we think ought to be sufficient reason for any modest girl avoiding it.

It is in vain to deceive ourselves by quoting the precedent or example of this or that person of distinction. If, in one or two rare instances, we chance to see a distinguished individual lay aside dignity and refinement, the evil will not be lessened, nor will the fact be thereby shaken, that the woman who is "fast," be she noble or be she simple, cannot be a truly refined and delicately minded woman.

"To copy faults is want of sense ;" and surely there can be little doubt that the woman who takes to manly pursuits, manly practices, struts about with hands in coat-pockets and pipe in mouth, discussing the points of a horse with grooms and jockeys, or the merits of a pointer with a low "dog-fancier," has supplied the faults, and the one who sets herself to copy these lacks the sense.

"Les extrêmes se touchent," and when things come to the worst they are sure to mend ; so we may take comfort in the hope that, now the feminine sex have done their utmost to make themselves appear like the masculine, a reaction will ere long take place ;

and we may look for a generation of the most charmingly womanlike, timid, reserved set of young ladies that it is possible for the imagination to picture, or the heart of man to delight in !

Now that we have spoken our minds on the subject of fast young ladies, we must be permitted to say a few words on another weakness of our sex exemplified in the present day—viz., the excessive love, not only of dress, and of expensive dress, but of incessant change.

This strong love of over-adornment pervades all classes of society, high and low, rich and poor. There is a continual craving for something new, wherewith to add to the fascination of our appearance. Every description of finery, however costly, is reproduced in a cheap form to meet the demands of the lower orders, who are, not unnaturally, ambitious to imitate their mistresses, although, in so doing, they overlook the fact, that the means and position of their superiors entitle and enable them to live and dress in a different way from those whose position is humble, whose means are scant, and whose lot is labour. On the

other hand, the higher classes overlook the influence of their example in the way of wasteful extravagance, and that they are responsible for it.

No position and no amount of means can justify needless and reckless expenditure; and there is no position, excepting perhaps that of royalty, which would render a constant and perpetual change of dress necessary. So long as the upper classes set the example of this endless longing for ever-changing novelties, we cannot be surprised to find the lower and uneducated orders endeavouring to carry out the same principle on a lower scale and on scantier means.

For the last few years, dress has been gradually increasing in cost; our skirts have assumed such ample dimensions, and the trimmings upon them have become so elaborate, that the amount of material requisite to make and trim a fashionable dress, would be sufficient to clothe a family! We are no longer content with a handsome silk dress. The dressmaker must expend her ingenuity in devising varieties in the mode of appending bars and bows, frills and flounces, cutting up a vast amount of

costly material in order to do so. We are a mass of bows and ends now-a-days. Ribbons float here, and ends dangle there. Our skirts sweep the streets, and a short time since our bonnets looked as though they would reach the skies; and no doubt it was the result of this last effort having proved ineffective that we suddenly found these bonnet fronts of lofty aspirations crushed down, conveying the idea of their having been snubbed, but in reality simply illustrating the female craving for change, which is so strong, that even such an absurd alteration as this was certain to charm and please the fancy!

Any novelty, however unbecoming, however hideous, is preferable to no novelty at all. A new dress, a new bonnet, a new mantle, seem to be essential to the happiness of womankind, and a perpetual succession of them to boot. In the middle classes especially, there is the strong desire to dress beyond their position. The comfort and welfare of the family are too often overlooked, in this strain after finery on the part of the female portion of it. We find them sailing about in robes and costumes of dimensions which may be suitable to the rooms

of a palace, and to carriages with lackeys in attendance to look after their mistresses' trains, but which are utterly incongruous seen in muddy streets or descending from a common hack vehicle. The only wonder is, how the fashion has obtained so long.

Need we be surprised to find servants adopting similar attempts at grandeur, especially when they see their mistress dressed far beyond her husband's means, and quite inconsistently with the sharp look-out that is kept on the joints, &c., in the kitchen.

Depend upon it, a ladylike person will always appear a lady, be she dressed ever so simply, so long as she is attired with neatness and with a due regard to her husband's position and means; and on the other hand, nothing can make an ordinary, common-looking woman look more common, more ordinary, than over-dress!

Until ladies, *en masse*, set themselves to oppose the present extravagance in quality and quantity of dress, it is in vain to cry out against servants.

We are not advocating an indifference as to external appearance, or the desirableness of

clipping skirts down to winding-sheet dimensions. We only recommend the reducing of the old adage to practice, "Cut your coat according to your cloth." Let every one dress in accordance with her means and her position, and good taste will, when allowed to come into play, ensure her appearing respectably and suitably attired.

We have now pointed out what we deem the deficiencies in the present system of girls' education, in so far as these have reference to the development of those qualifications which are necessary in order to fit them for taking their part in practical every-day life.

Much might be said in regard to the education of boys; of the over-work and strain upon their minds, to say nothing of that upon the physical strength, which the severity of competitive examinations has led to; of the precociousness, irreverence, and want of respect towards elders on the part of the rising generation, and which we believe to be in a great measure due to the present mode of instruction, for we cannot call it education.

But it is a subject not only beyond the scope of our little manual, but one which would re-

quire a more able and powerful pen to deal with than that of a woman. We shall therefore conclude by suggesting a few hints in a general way to those who may be already launched into positions of responsibility, and who are surrounded by cares and duties which they feel oppressive from their having everything to learn at their own cost; early training for such duties having, in their case, been neglected.

Our hints can only be of a general kind, as all details must necessarily depend upon the circumstances of each individual.



## CHAPTER V.

## CONCLUSION.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.

"I speak of common troubles and the petty plagues of life.

"Not few nor light are the burdens of this life, then load it not with heaviness."

UNDER all circumstances, it will be found that the keynote to good management is "system." If this be carried into every arrangement throughout a household, order, comfort, and regularity are certain to follow. If it be neglected, disorder, confusion, discomfort, and discontent are equally certain to prevail; they, again, bringing forth the reproaches of the different members of the family, who naturally hold the mistress of the house responsible for them.

Let "system" be applied to every household detail, and half the troubles of a housekeeper will vanish. Let her fix a time for her

own duties, plan her servants' work, appoint a right place for every article in the house being kept, and then see that the fixed routine be carried out in every department. And the more multifarious the claims upon the house-keeper's time, the greater will be the comfort afforded to herself and others, and the easier will the performance of duties become.

Method and system will of themselves ensure punctuality, which is so essential not merely to comfort, but to economy.

As we have said before, it is hardly possible to supply a routine which would suit every one ; we must, therefore, content ourselves with pointing out the general rules.

In setting down fixed routine, the mistress of the house should be careful to avoid those times for her own duties during which male relatives are at home, and, as far as practicable, reserve for such, occupations which do not engross her thoughts and attention. The morning ought to be amply sufficient for attention to household matters ; the afternoon being kept free for visiting, or for occupations suitable to the drawing-room.

Women, often with the best intentions, make

the blunder of doing right things at the wrong time, and when they find husband or brother impatient at their being constantly so occupied, as to render anything like quiet conversation, or even a stroll, impossible, they feel hurt and vexed at the thought of their well-meant efforts being so misunderstood. But the mistake lies in their selecting inappropriate times for the performance of duties which are both right and necessary.

We ladies being all aware among ourselves of the unreasonableness (!) of mankind, who, we know, expect everything to be clean and tidy, comfortable and orderly, and yet detest the sight of broom and duster, should strive to humour this said *unreasonableness*, and endeavour to afford them the results they so value, while we are careful to keep the dust and noise of our machinery out of sight and hearing ! System and method will do this : and, however unreasonable the lords of the creation may be, we feel sure that few are so selfish and inconsiderate as to believe that a comfortable *ménage* is a *natural growth*, or that such can exist without an efficient head. However unobtrusively duties may be performed, the fruits of them

will be sufficient proof of the self-denial, the care and trouble, of the moving spring of the household mechanism. No one who reflects for a moment on what is necessary on the part of the mistress of a thoroughly well-managed establishment, could fail to credit her for much self-denial, patience, and devotion.

If all the home machinery is working smoothly and well, there is sure to be a vigilant eye and skilful hand at work, keeping the wheels well oiled. We do not require to see her, cruse and brush in hand, near the machinery, to convince us of it; there is proof enough, and far more pleasant, in the results.

Women rarely get any assistance from male relatives in the management of household matters. On the contrary, their interference is certain to produce unpleasant consequences. In every way it is better for "papa" to be satisfied with well-cooked meals, and "baby" in her best frock, and on her best behaviour, than that he should descend to the kitchen to insist on the trial of unheard-of modes of cookery, or suggest impracticable schemes for the management of babies.

There are, happily, few men whose ambition

takes this form. The bulk of mankind is satisfied to leave such matters in the hands of the female members of the household. If, unhappily, they are incapable of managing, matters will not be mended by a man's interference.

Perhaps one of the greatest troubles which housekeepers have to contend with is servants. There is no denying their many delinquencies; but merely to expatiate upon or inveigh against them, would be of little avail. On the old principle of "what can't be cured must be endured," we have little else left but to take servants as they are, and make the best of them. Very much depends upon ourselves as mistresses, upon our own example, even in regard to dress, as we have elsewhere said; it being quite as possible for us to dress beyond our means as for our servants to do so. In every way we should set them the example of what we desire and expect from them.

Our manner towards them will greatly influence theirs towards us; and where calmness and consideration, good temper and forbearance, are apparent in the head of the house, servants will find it difficult to show disrespect, or any approach to insolence or impertinence.

Few things are more essential to those who are placed in positions of responsibility than self-control. We all know how necessary it is to be able to govern ourselves, before we attempt ruling over others; and there are few positions where habits of self-control are so important as in the mother of a family and the mistress of a household.

All the members look to her in times of domestic trouble and difficulty. Whatever storms may have burst in the kitchen, or whatever *émeutes* may have taken place in the nursery, the mistress of the house is expected to be calm, and ready to cast oil on the troubled waters.

If, unhappily, there is an absence of this self-control, if every delinquency produces irritation, and angry words are hurled here, and "slaps" showered there, on the chubby cheeks of small offenders, we need scarcely be surprised to find those, whose education and training have been inferior to our own, giving way in like manner, making use of offensive language, and supplementing "mamma's practical applications" by a few additional cuffs to the little cheeks!

Whatever the occasion or nature of the offence, a few words, whether of reproof or remonstrance, will have infinitely more effect, coming from one who is thoroughly mistress of herself; while, on the other hand, be the provocation ever so great, the loss of temper or self-control brings necessarily a sense of humiliation after it. In the heat of temper there is sure to be misapprehension, while patience and calmness admit of things being explained, and often make the offence appear in a less heinous light than it did at the first glance.

In regard to the mere details of house-keeping, and the creature-comforts, mistresses should rather err on the side of liberality in the matter of food to servants; not in pampering them with expensive delicacies, but simply in providing an ample supply of good wholesome food. This goes a great way towards making them contented, and deprives them in some measure of the temptation to pick and steal.

There is no doubt that kindness shown to servants has often been abused, but at the same time it is better, not only for them but

for oneself, to treat them with consideration, and take an interest in them. If anything will develop good feeling on their part towards masters and mistresses, this is the most likely; and after all, we should bear in mind that a servant's lot is not always a happy one. But while we do all in our power to render their position in our service as pleasant as we can, it is not necessary that we should leave things to their discretion; on the contrary, it is an advantage to them as well as to ourselves to look carefully after everything. Our own interests are thereby protected, and they are spared temptations which too frequently are beyond their powers to resist.

“Fast bind, fast find,

“A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.”

No housekeeper need fear respectable servants objecting to the use of lock and key, so long as there are no unfounded suspicions cast on any one, and no approach to stinginess in the household arrangements.

We can only wind up as we began, by advocating “system” in everything; and we are quite certain that the adoption and application



of it to the daily duties and necessities of a household will save many a disappointment, many a reproach, and not a few matrimonial squabbles.

And now we have said our little say; our motive has been good, though the performance may have been faulty. But if our hints and suggestions should prove a help to any who are wearing out their own health and temper, as well as wearying the spirit of their husbands, by fruitless endeavours to make things go straight, we shall feel satisfied.





